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AUTHOR Britt, Alice Mae
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ABSTRACT

SER's National Hispanic Literacy Initiative, which is implemented through a network of 51 family learning centers (FLCs) that serve economically disadvantaged adults and children, is described. The concept is based on the objective of intergenerational learning, which prescribes that parents and grandparents will desire to learn so that they may help their children learn. The FLCs include the following components: basic skills training; enriched childcare; employment/volunteer opportunities for the elderly as caregivers; opportunities for social interaction; links between Hispanic parents and public schools; literacy partnerships between employers and schools; and information about social service agencies. In addition, FLCs have three major, interrelated components: basic skills instruction and job skills training; intergenerational "smart" childcare; and advisory literacy councils. Details of the these features are offered, and the FLC record from 1987 to 1990 is reviewed. Program sponsors and endorsements are cited, followed by a report of SER's 5-year (1986-1990) strategic plan, its literacy initiative, and the rationale and objectives of the FLC program. Additional information is given on FLC staffing, program implementation, computer-assisted instructional curricula (e.g., "Writing to Read," including a Spanish language version, and the IBM-based PALS center), and the FLC program training capacity. (LB)

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INNOVATION IN INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING
SER-JOBS FOR PROGRESS NATIONAL, INC.'S
THE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAM

by Alice Mae Britt, Planner
SER National, Inc. 100 Decker Court, Suite 200 Irving, Texas 75062

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SER's National Hispanic Literacy Initiative is being implemented through a network of 51 Family Learning Centers (FLCs) which bring together and serve economically disadvantaged individuals, their children, and senior citizens from the community. The concept is based on the objective of intergenerational learning which prescribes that parents and grandparents will desire to learn so that they in turn may help their children learn. The children benefit from the early help and from more literate parents and grandparents, and society has a breakdown in the cycle of illiteracy which is perpetuated from generation to generation. The programmatic offerings of the FLCs address:

- Basic skills training
- Enriched childcare for children of FLC program participants
- Employment/volunteer opportunities for the elderly as caregivers
- Opportunities for purposeful social interaction among several generations
- Linkages between Hispanic parents and the public education system as a means of improving education of school age children
- Development of other literacy partnerships between employers and schools, which are responsible also for education of future workers
- Providing FLC enrollees information about social service agencies for medical or other assistance for their families

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All FLCs have three major, interrelated components. They are: Basic Skills Instruction and Job Skills Training (traditional instruction and automated learning environments ALE), Intergenerational "Smart" Child Care (ancillary and academic), and Literacy Councils (advisory). Basic skills instruction and job skills training focus on at-risk youth 16 years and older, welfare mothers with children under six, and functionally illiterate adults who are either long-term unemployed or discouraged workers. The intergenerational, enriched child care is provided for pre- and elementary school age Hispanic children so that they will be better prepared to benefit from their schooling experiences. The literacy councils are composed of Hispanic parents, educators, and employers whose objective is to improve the education of in-school Hispanic youth.

I. FLC Basic and Job-skills Training

The centerpiece of the FLC program and its major educational component is the provision of basic and job skills training to economically disadvantaged individuals. The FLC provides training in an automated, state-of-the-art learning environment that covers academic competencies ranging from elementary reading and math through high school and introductory college-level courses, as well as functional competencies considered necessary for success in the family, society, and the workplace. These training services include: basic skills remediation, English as a Second Language, introductory college courses, life coping skills training, general educational development (GED) and high school diploma courses, occupational skills training, job search and job preparation instruction, citizenship and cultural literacy, and health and parenting courses. To deliver these services, the FLC utilizes a multimedia approach, combining equipment and computer courseware where necessary for effective training:

- IBM's Principles of the Alphabet Literacy System (PALS), an interactive videodisc (IVD) program designed for adults who read at or below the fifth grade level. A full PALS laboratory consists of four Infowindow stations, eight computers, and four printers. A fileserver is used to create a local area network.

- IBM's Writing To Read (WTR) and the Spanish version Vamos a

Leer Escribiendo (VALE), instruct children to phonemically write what they can say, and to read what they can write. Upon completion, WTR children typically read at two grade levels above the national average.

- o IBM's Basic Skills Courseware ranging from Reading for Meaning, Spelling, Vocabulary, and Math Concepts to Primary Editor Plus word processing

- o Interactive Training, Inc.'s SkillPAC, an IVD program focusing on workplace literacy for populations who read at the fifth grade level and above

- o U. S. Basics' Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) designed for adults who read at or above the fifth grade level

2. FLC SER Intergenerational "Smart" Child Care

The second educational component is "SER CARE," a child care program with the objective to enhance children's development while their parents are receiving basic skills' and job skills' instruction, or have completed SER educational and training program courses and are employed. It not only is innovative but a cost-effective alternative to the current child care crisis affecting the nation today. Based on the 1975 intergenerational model developed by the Elvirita Lewis Foundation, each SER CARE employs trained child care specialists who are assisted by senior citizens from the community. The intergenerational approach of the SER "Smart" Care provides ways for senior citizens to lead active and satisfying lives while showing children positive role models in a nurturing and stimulating environment. Additionally, senior citizens utilize the services of the FLC to develop their own skills, especially language acquisition.

The FLC SER CARE expands the custodial child care concept to include computer-assisted instruction (CAI). This CAI is in addition to offering the traditional early childhood development day care activities. Incorporating CAI

into the SER CARE component gives the children the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of reading and writing in English before they enter school. This language skills builder provides the child with a head-start which facilitates the transition from day care to school. Children are taught the fundamentals of reading and writing through the use of the IBM "Writing To Read" (WTR) and the Spanish version "Vamos a Leer Escribiendo" (VALE). WTR is a multi-sensory, self-paced interactive instructional program designed to promote the development of their reading skills and to foster self-confidence and positive attitudes toward their education.

3. FLC Literacy Councils

The Literacy Councils (LC) are the community advisory elements of the family learning centers. The Councils consist of parents, educators, and employers whose primary objective is to improve the education of school-age youth. This goal is to be accomplished by parents helping educators, and educators helping parents, to become more effective in the education of minority students. The goal also calls for the enlistment of support from the private sector. The Literacy Councils identify problems with the community that adversely affect the educaton of youth and develop solutions either through new FLC program development, or through partnerships with the school system or other community service agencies. The Literacy Councils help to make parents more aware of how to function with the school system, thus offering them the opportunity to enhance their children's education, and address individual problems.

THE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAM TRACK RECORD
1987-1990

The growth rate of SER's FLCs nationwide from three to fifty-one in just three program years is unprecedented and exemplifies the overwhelming efforts SER is demonstrating to aid the disadvantaged in America and decrease illiteracy. The FLC concept revolutionized the ways SER offers employment and training programs, making SER's service methodology more technological, comprehensive, accessible, and cost-effective. A decrease in the traditional classroom format specializing in training such as auto mechanics, carpentry,

and other vocational trades changed the program diversity to include more developmental skills for individualized social empowerment.

Each FLC, through its activities, brought together in a single setting people with a variety of experiences, values, and goals. The strength of the interpersonal relationships that developed, fostered intergenerational understanding and appreciation. Children whose parent or parents worked outside the home benefited from the quality care they received; parents received training and job opportunities, secure in the knowledge that their children were cared for and educated; and older people received satisfaction, and in some instances, needed income.

Implementation of the FLC program was a timely measure because the SER clientele, nationwide, already had taken a new profile to include single parents on public assistance, out-of-school pregnant teenagers, high school drop-outs, unemployed adults, immigrants, older workers, senior citizens and basic skills deficient adults. The SER family learning centers concept proved to be a versatile program having multiple applications. The original challenge of providing basic skills training to 60,000 Hispanics in five years was surpassed within three years. In PY years 1987-1990, the FLC program demonstrated enormous potential for meeting the employment, educational, and literacy skills needs of over one million economically disadvantaged individuals annually. Approximately 200,000 of those individuals served participated in IBM employment training offered in the FLCs. On the average, 86% of program participants graduated to find full-time employment or continue their education because of their training (SER National Literacy Laboratory Data 1990).

Inclusion of the FLCs in the local SER corporations (LSCs) has had positive effects. The FLCs have increased each LSC's employment and training contribution to the community in which it operates. It permitted those affiliates which administer an FLC to remain or become even more competitive in the job training arena. The most recent SER data (Program Year 1988-89) reflect that the SER affiliates administering FLCs exceeded JTPA performance standards in all categories. These results were achieved for the most part under JTPA Title II-A (youth) and II-B (adult) programs. Along with successful capacity building for the affiliates, organizational operations became more high-tech.

Computer technology and intergenerational learning presented new interests to the public and private sectors from which funding support was generated locally and nationally for the innovative concept.

PROGRAM SPONSORS AND ENDORSEMENTS

Since its development in 1986, no previous SER employment and training program has received as much interest and support as the Family Learning Center program. The depth and lasting commitment exhibited on the part of corporations for the FLC program has been of distinct significance. In the first two years of the grant period with the Department of Labor, SER's Family Learning Center program counted 20 corporate partnerships. In PY 1989-90, SER's FLC program generated 26 corporate partnerships. Instead of a company stepping forward to support the implementation of one FLC, companies thought and acted on a larger scale. Of note is the Coors Family Literacy "Pass It On" program where a commitment of $250,000 per year over a five (5) year period was made by the Coors Foundation. The Pepsi-Cola "Alliance for Literacy Program" joined SER to implement five in-school FLCs within Texas, with the prospects of expanding this project nationally in the future. Sears, Roebuck and Company translated its long-standing commitment to SER's work by funding the implementation of three FLCs. IBM has donated millions of dollars in in-kind grants to several SER affiliates for expansion of the literacy skills training they provide. The SER/IBM 1989 partnership produced the advanced training center program for business skills training in the FLCs, which had a 524% return on investment. (SER/IBM Data Report 1990). Other corporate supporters include: Arco, AT & T, Allstate, Kodak, Kraft, Inc., Aetna Life Insurance, JC Penney, Mobil, Unisys, and Marriott. Private foundation support includes: Meadows, Moody, Ford, Hearst and Mott. The backing acquired by the entire SER network from 1987 through 1990 from corporations, foundations, federal agency grants, individual contributors, and private industry councils (PICs) through JTPA shows that the various support sectors recognize the Family Learning Center program as one that makes a measurable difference in Hispanic illiteracy.

SER's Family Learning Center program has received wide acclaim. In PY 1988-89, the FLCs in Dallas, Texas and East Los Angeles, California were

visited by the former U. S. Department of Labor Secretary, Elizabeth Dole. Former Secretary Dole deemed SER's FLC project to be the most innovative and effective training program under the auspices of the Labor Department. The following year, SER's Family Learning Center was selected by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy as one of the ten most promising family literacy programs highlighted in its publication, First Teachers: A Family Literacy Handbook for Parents, Policy-makers, and Literacy Providers. Other endorsements have been bestowed from the ABC Literacy Plus Campaign, the Senate Task Force on Hispanic Affairs, and Literacy Volunteers of America.

The pinnacle of recognition for the efforts SER has put forth to eliminate illiteracy among the Hispanic sector occurred on July 24, 1991, when the Family Learning Center Concept was presented at the UNESCO-sponsored global conference of the International Council on Education for Teaching. The ICET World Assembly's 1991 theme was "Education for All" from early childhood to adulthood. SER's Family Learning Center Concept epitomizes "the worldwide effort to provide a basic education for all humanity -- the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for people to survive, to live in dignity, to continue to improve the quality of their lives, their communities and nations" (38th ICET World Assembly Dedication 1991).

THE BEGINNING OF THE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAM

1. SER'S Five Year Strategic Plan

In 1986, SER national, SER executives and the Department of Labor began one of the most impacting studies to examine the projected, demographic trends for fifteen years (1986-2001) destined to affect the Hispanic American workforce and the economy. A new long-range goal was adopted to guide SER activities during the period of 1986-1990 "to maximize Hispanic participation in the United States' job market and to promote their economic independence so as to enhance the United States' competitive position in the global economy" (SER Five Year Strategic Plan, Vol. 1). SER's challenge in the plan was determining how to fulfill the organization's already full agenda and position SER to meet the needs of the future. SER recognized that policies and programs that focused only on current problems and resources

may not be flexible enough to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Of particular concern was identification of specific implications of these changes for Hispanics. SER's contribution to the development of Hispanics became a major literacy improvement effort-- SER's National Hispanic Literacy Initiative.

2. SER's Literacy Initiative

When the SER-Jobs for Progress Board of Directors voted unanimously in December, 1986, to make literacy training the first priority in SER's policy and programmatic agenda for the next five years, the entire network chose to undertake the most serious obstacle Hispanics face -- illiteracy. The Board's decision was the result of examining SER's two decades of experience in training and employment which confirmed these five points:

- Hispanics need, first and foremost in preparation for work, the basic skills in reading, writing, computing and reasoning. For many, learning to speak and use English is a prerequisite.

- Older Hispanic youth require increased attention because of functional illiteracy and unemployment or marginal employment.

- Hispanic children's experiences prior to entry into the formal education system can influence profoundly their learning experiences in regular school settings. Improved pre-school preparation is vital to generational intervention of the illiteracy cycle within the Hispanic family unit.

- The rapid Hispanic growth rate is accompanied by a steady and high rate of school dropouts and increased illiteracy among the young.

- The American nation will lose its competitive edge in the global marketplace if illiteracy among its citizens is not combatted. Literacy, especially among Hispanics, and the nation's economy are interdependent.

THE RATIONALE FOR THE FAMILY LEARNING CENTERS: THEN AND NOW

1. Hispanics in the U. S.

Hispanics living in the United States total approximately 25.2 million. By the year 2000, the Hispanic population is estimated to be 34.8 million. In 1989, the census data figure was 20.1 million. The population growth rate is phenomenally high and indicates major changes in the structure of this special population with effects not yet fully projected within the American society. The fastest growing population in the United States has specific obstacles that translate into a broad problem that threatens the Hispanic capabilities of each component of the family structure. Their hardships mount and increase with the day to day challenge of existing in a society in which stabilization involves the tedious removal of numerous socio-economic barriers. The Hispanic obstacles are, in many instances, the same as for many disadvantaged Americans, but in more cases, extremely unique only to them. The Hispanic obstacles have roots in these: a rising population rate coupled with a slow assimiliation time, low income earnings, a high unemployment rate, a high poverty ratio, lack of basic academic skills and inadequate job training, no health care, and the corrosion of the once tightly-woven family structure. These issues make the largest minority population in the U. S. a definitive underclass.

2. Illiteracy

Illiteracy and limited-English-proficiency are two major problems that directly affect the daily lives of Hispanics. Hispanics consistently have higher rates of illiteracy than any other population group, and it seriously hinders their ability to become fully participating members of the American society.

- Approximately seven million Hispanics, 16 years and older, are functionally illiterate; 50% of these are unemployed.

- 56% of all Hispanic adults are functionally illiterate.

- The number of adult illiterates increases by 1.5 million each year, largely because of high school dropouts.

- One third of Hispanic mothers on welfare are functionally illiterate.

- Legal and illegal immigrants and high school dropouts add more than 200,000 hispanics annually to the pool of functional illiterates.

Illiteracy for Hispanics means a lack of reading, writing, reasoning, mathematics and problem solving skills; these skills are necessary to fulfill their self-determined goals. Among Hispanic subgroups, 15.4% of Mexican Americans, 10.3% of Puerto Ricans, and 6.0% of Cuban Americans over 25 years of age are considered illiterate. When years of school completed are used, Hispanics are much more likely to be determined illiterate because the school retention and completion rates are so much lower for Hispanics. Hispanics leave school at earlier ages, completing fewer years than other population subgroups.

- 40% of all Hispanic dropouts leave school before the 10th grade.

- The dropout rate, one out of every ten, for Hispanics remains the highest for any major United States subpopulation, estimated at 45-50%, and over 70% in some large urban areas. Dropouts include both limited English proficient and fluent English speakers, and both groups often lack full English literacy.

- About 43% of Hispanics aged 19 years old and over are not enrolled in high school and have no high school diploma. By age 16-17, almost one in five Hispanics (19.5%) has left school without a diploma.

- Over one-third of Hispanic mothers who receive support from welfare are functionally illiterate.

- 40% of current Hispanic military recruits cannot read the manuals required to perform assigned tasks.

3. Limited English Proficiency

Hispanics who are illiterate and who lack proficiency in the English language join the group of disadvantaged called the "hard-to-serve." Approximately 45 percent of Hispanic adults lack proficiency in speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language. Limited English proficient and non-native speaking Hispanics influence the Hispanic illiteracy concern. Many Hispanics read, write and speak Spanish, but have no, or limited, proficiency in English; they are literate in Spanish but have not acquired English. Other Hispanics speak only Spanish but do not read or write either in Spanish or English. Many other Hispanics who lack English literacy skills are native or fluent English speakers. Many are faced with the dilemma of having to learn a new language and to basic literacy skills--all for the first time.

The lack of appropriate services for limited-English proficient children contributes to English illiteracy among Hispanics.

- The Children's English Services Study estimates by the year 2000, the number of limited English proficient children from Spanish-language backgrounds will increase to 2.6 million.

- Two-thirds of the 3.5 million to 5.5 million limited English proficient children do not receive any kind of special language services.

- Most three-to-five year olds speak their parents' language; they live in monolingual Spanish-speaking households.

- Hispanic children who reside in single-parent households, 30.2%, may have limited parent involvement in providing support for educational development; this situation becomes more highly problematic if the parent is not English proficient.

- For children from monolingual Spanish-speaking households, the transition from home to predominantly English-speaking schools creates cul-tural difficulties.

These children are submersed in English- only classrooms where they fall behind in subject matter at an early age because they do not understand the language of the instruction, and frequently receive inadequate English language instruction.

In addition, the demand for English proficiency and literacy have increased greatly as a result of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Individuals who wish to adjust their status from temporary resident to permanent resident under the law must demonstrate an understanding of the English language, U. S. history and government, or show enrollment in an approved course.

Illiteracy and limited-English proficiency impose serious restrictions on the Hispanic population. Both diminish employment opportunities or give Hispanics the only choice of low-level jobs with no hope of career upward mobility. Especially for long-term unemployed youth, substance abuse, crime and prison are the results. Iliteracy and limited-English proficiency prevent parents from demonstrating an active role in the education of their children. Illiterate parents are unable to perform basic tasks related to school for their children, such as read forms, check homework, respond to teachers' requests or contribute to concerns.They forfeit, by virtue of illiteracy, the right to a partnership in their children's education. Illiteracy and limited-English proficiency deter many Hispanics from becoming naturalized citizens even though they contribute to the nation's welfare as taxpayers and laborers. Naturalization laws require that prospective citizens demonstrate basic English literacy skills, but because of the lack of affordable English literacy services, Hispanics and others in need of ESL training are often forclosed from seeking citizenship and participating in the American political process.

THE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Component One: Basic Skills and Job Training

Within automated learning environments, utilizing a state-of-the art combination of technologies for computer-assisted instruc- tion, the FLC Basic Skills and Job training component delivers as determined by an 80% participant completion factor:

a. academic instruction in remedial and developmental skills building that will increase the comprehension and analytical capabilities of each participant

b. training in literacy skills improvement within the five areas: reading, writing, English proficiency, mathematics and reasoning or problem solving (self-paced/ open entry/open exit)

c. life coping skills enhancement that promotes smoother mainstreaming in daily life (self-paced/ open entry/open exit)

d. training in occupational skills for specific jobs

e. specialized English as a second language instruction equal to 90-100 hours (self-paced/ open-entry/open-exit: IBM's Principles of the Alphabet Literacy System [PALS])

f. GED study for the high school equivalency

g. citizenship study and cultural literacy

h. introductory college courses

2. Component Two: SER "Smart" Childcare

The SER "Smart" Childcare is designed to enhance children's educational development while their parents are receiving basic and job skills instruction. Housed within the center, SER seeks to provide those adults enrolled in basic and job skills training with a smart day care center option. The smart day care

center is a setting conducive to the children's learning, development, and enrichment, all of which are accomplished through the use of teachers and computer- assisted instruction programs.

Within the early childhood area of the family learning center containing a separate automated learning environment, the SER "Smart" Childcare component delivers or demonstrates as determined by a 80% participant involvement and interaction with computer-assisted instruction:

a. significant statistical gains in reading and writing English using the English version of "Writing To Read" with a participant duration time of at least 12 weeks. IBM's "Writing To Read" is the CAI utilized in the SER CARE.

b. significant statistical gains after native language building in "VALE," the Spanish language version of "Writing To Read."

c. increased general English language proficiency of those students using "Writing To Read" who remain in the program for twenty weeks or more

3. Component Three: The Literacy Councils

After a successful outreach program to generate community interest in the role of the Literacy Councils and the strategic impact such an advisory group can have on the increased potential of youth, the involvement in local Literacy Councils will be recogniz- able with 100% participation rate by educators, parents, and employers. The objectives are to:

a. educate community leaders about the national and local implications of illiteracy

b. design and implement community strategies for reducing the number of dropouts and promote the Family Learning Center

c. council at-risk youth, ages 21 and below, who have experienced difficulty or encountered barriers in education or employment, above and beyond the fact of being economically disadvantaged. At-risk youth include: dropouts and

potential dropouts, welfare participants, substance abusers, offenders/exoffenders, adjudicated youth, handicapped, teen parents, migrants, wards of the state; those youth who have limited English speaking ability or who exhibit reading comprehension difficulties.

THE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER STAFF

The SER National office in Irving, Texas is responsible for the FLC development and implementation as well as research and evaluation. Four employees are assigned and are responsible for all the tasks associated with its operation. All are working usually on two or more existing and targeted FLC sites at any given time. Each staff person has expertise ranging from curriculum development to educational research.

The Family Learning Center Unit currently consists of four staff members: a family learning center coordinator, two program development specialists, and an educational researcher. The current Family Learning Center staff is responsible for the fifty-one FLCs already implemented as well as the additional FLCs SER adds. Establishing and monitoring Family Learning Centers are continuous tasks for the Unit, and past experience has shown that an overload of the Family Learning Center staff is a common occurrence.

FLC Staff
Location: SER National, Inc. Irving, Dallas, Texas

FLC Coordinator (1)
FLC Program Development Specialists (2)
FLC Educational Researcher (1)

The FLC Coordinator supervises all staff members within the Family Learning Center Unit and is responsible for developing, piloting, and implementing a system of Family Learning Centers among the SER affiliates. The coordinator oversees the ongoing training for staff on implementation of FLCs; assists in the maintenance of a Management Information System; provides updates regarding FLC turnkey package options for distribution to affiliates, funding sources, and for program development; reviews existing CAI and packages

them into adaptive modules for FLC affiliates' use; and, monitors the operational performance of all local FLCs. The FLC coordinator promotes and develops public and private sector partnerships for FLCs as well as researches and develops funding in support of the National Hispanic Literacy Initiative. All FLC budget expenses are monitored by the coordinator who prepares all reports as needed for the SER administration and various external funding sources.

The Program Development Specialists are responsible for designing, planning, and developing employment and training projects at the national and local levels; researching and developing new funding sources in support of SER initiatives and programs; and, for designing proposals and technical reports prepared by the FLC unit. A significant responsibility is for database information and operations. Because they are acccountable for all capacity building within the FLCs, the program development specialists perform all needs assessments done at the local SER corporations for any activity involving FLCs. All formative and summative evaluations are conducted by them, and communication with external evaluative sources is coordinated via their direction. The program development specialists advise the local SER directors on FLC implementation, the FLC coordinator and the SER National administration.

The Educational Researcher is responsible for performing research, evaluation, dissemination, and planning of programmatic activities concerned with the SER Family Learning Center Program. This staff member reviews instructional material and hardware applicable to the FLCs curriculum and submits timely FLC program progress reports. Workshops, seminars, mini-conferences, and scheduled regional and national meetings concerning the Family Learning Center Program are organized by the educational researcher.

FAMILY LEARNING CENTER IMPLEMENTATION

SER has been implementing Family Learning Centers for four years and has undergone transitions in the plan of implementation for them through much trial and error. The current implementation methodology ensures smooth, expeditious installations. SER, based on much preliminary preparedness, easily can install one Family Learning Center per quarter in a year, which means four per year. Implementation of Family Learning Centers generally

follows these directives:

1. Preliminary Development

   Examine all statistical and demographic data on each SER affiliate or new partnership entity, and the geographic area through the National Literacy Laboratory

   Perform on-site needs assessments of each affiliate or partnership entity for evaluation of feasibility

   Prepare needs analyses on the targeted sites for final approval and authorization from SER National's chief administrative personnel

   Consult the executive director about local staffing and physical facility preparation

   Secure or appropriate funding, whichever is necessary for the targeted sites

2. Implementation Preparation

   Conduct all preliminary meetings with the funding entity, affiliate executive directors or partnership administrators, SER National administration, unit managers in association, and FLC staff

   Orient the executive directors about the corporate criteria for Family Learning Center implementation and operation

   Prepare Family Learning Center Program curriculum packets with guidebook, module design and operational manual and forward to the executive directors

   Provide initial correspondence with the designated vendors giving

notification of anticipated purchases to determine availability of equipment, courseware and supplies or vendor changes

Order computer equipment, courseware, materials and supplies specifying delivery date

Schedule installation at the targeted sites, making changes where allowable based on the equipment delivery dates

Ship equipment and other materials

3. Family Learning Center Installation

Install on-site the automated learning environments, PALS and Writing To Read laboratories.

Conduct in-service training for the local affiliate staff on procedures for equipment operation, managing the laboratory, and suppling the National Literacy Laboratory with participant data (This training is ongoing).

Review Family Learning Center criteria with the executive director and local staff, as well as conduct briefings on outreach and public relations for the program

4. Program Monitoring

Continue to provide weekly monitoring for one month after FLC operation begins at each site with three on-site field observations conducted within the first four months to guarantee FLC utilization controls

Compile statistical data for internal and external evaluations conducted formatively and summatively

FLC COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTIONAL CURRICULUMS

The core of the Family Learning Center is the state-of-the-art computer technology, competent and sensitive instructors and highly effective outreach, counseling and placement staffs.

Computer assisted instruction, using IBM hardware, has proven to be an effective learning tool that provides students with functional and academic curricula in an open entry-open exit, self-paced environment. This concept affords the student a noncompetitive environment that leads to quality grade level achievement and provides the instructor with the opportunity to give more individualized and quality assistance.

Computers, endlessly patient, with course materials that are courteous and culturally sensitive, can overcome may barriers. The FLCs use technology in a way that makes parent, child, and grandparent the learning unit. While the mother, father or grandparent is learning how to read with computerized learning systems, their pre-school child is working on the computer with Writing To Read. The premise is that mothers, fathers and grandparents will work harder to learn so that they will help their children learn. The children will benefit from the early help and from more literate parents -- the single best predictor of a child's academic performance. The children also will learn from senior citizens who work as day care volunteers and aides.

1. Automated Learning Environments

The Family Learning Centers (FLC) are utilizing IBM equipment for its computer base. The present FLC configuration consists of a system that connects up to 50 individual student workstations with a file server that functions as a system manager to create an instructional Local Area Network (LAN).

The PC class manager provides for individualized instruction by delivering lessons which the teacher selects to match the clients' particular skill levels. The management system also provides a variety of options and produces comprehensive reports which show the progress of each individual client and

overall class progress.

The fileserver includes a hard disk that stores the courseware and a network management system which eliminates the need for teachers and clients to manage and handle individual diskettes. This management system allows a teacher to have up to 50 different lessons and/or skill levels at the same time, yet the teacher remains in complete control. The computer deals with the client records, testing, scoring, and other information, leaving the teacher free to provide individualized instruction.

The specific workstations have color monitors which enhance the computer courseware. Other components can be added to enhance the instructional value such as voice adapters. In addition, through use of the classroom management system, clients can communicate amongst themselves and with their instructor.

The connectivity allows computers to talk to each other and to remote computers. The data can be gathered and maintained on the Local Area Network in the local affiliate. Another advantage of a Local Area Network is that it is only necessary to have one server station. If a Family Learning Center is configured for the PALS or the WTR lab, many aspects of this equipment also can be networked into the fileserver, thereby increasing efficiency and reducing cost.

Local affiliate administration can be performed on the PS/2 systems located in the local affiliate offices which can be part of the FLC or operate stand alone from the network. Client administrative functions done on a Family Learning Center LAN give the local affiliate the information necessary to do the proper job in the areas of recruitment, bid response, student tracking on a local basis and local demographic trends. The local affiliate is able to evaluate local offerings and provide justification of new programs for the local affiliate.

2. Courseware

The courseware packages available for this hardware configuration are flexible and can be designed to fit a specific affiliate's Family Learning Center. The

heart of the courseware is the IBM School Pack series which includes: reading comprehension, science, mathematics, and language skills. In addition, there is the Tutor series which can act as a remediation or enrichment package in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing. Writing to Read (WTR), Principles of the Alphabet Literacy System (PALS), and the Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) are the three major parts of the family learning center CAI curriculum.

IBM's "Writing To Read" (WTR)

The SER "Smart" care component is directed by a state certified bilingual teacher for each affiliate with a specialization in early childhood education, assisted by a bilingual aide. The teacher is experienced in LEP pre-school instruction and possesses comprehensive technological expertise in the IBM "Writing To Read" program.

The SER care follows the general early childhood model: security, warmth, a range of developmental opportunities, individual attention, and activities designed to promote social, emotional and intellectual development. All children enter formal education already having had a range of experience. Children whose parents have provided them with a broad exposure to the world and an understanding of reading mechanics tend to perform better in school than those with more limited experiences. SER CARE is designed to provide preschoolers with a full range of positive experiences.

SER, through early childhood education programs, is ensuring that the child care aspect includes computer assisted instruction for pre-schoolers: "Writing To Read." "Writing To Read" was developed for IBM by Dr. John Henry Martin. It was designed to help develop the writing and reading skills of kindergarten and first grade students. SER, in partnership with IBM, is utilizing the program for 3-5 year olds whose first language is Spanish. The program is a multimedia educational system designed to teach children how to write what they can say and read what they write. The method builds writing and reading skills before a child has mastered the intricacies of spelling in the English language, and encourages students to focus on how individual letters represent sounds that produce words and how words form sentences.

"Writing To Read" combines advanced technology with educational techniques based on extensive research to provide an innovative approach to learning. The program not only builds writing and reading skills, it also stimulates imagination, encourages a basic desire to learn and helps children build self-confidence.

"Writing To Read" Procedure

For one hour a day, children come to the "Writing To Read" area where they use a variety of high tech equipment and various educational materials organized into five learning stations. Teachers, who receive specialized training from the SER National Literacy Laboratory function in a dual capacity, serving as educational managers who monitor each student's progress and assist the children with their individual needs. Students are further stimulated to learn by working side by side with their peers on some portions of the program.

"Writing To Read" uses a selected set of 42 phonemes, which are letters and combinations of letters that represent the sounds of spoken English. After learning the entire set, students can write phonetically and word in the English language they can pronounce. Throughout the programs, phonemic spelling is accompanied by book spelling. After using phonemic spelling, children better understand the peculiarities of standard spelling. The process can be compared to toddlers progressing from simple sounds and syllables to complete words and sentences.

Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey has found "Writing To Read": is a powerful and effective educational program; enables children to attain progressively complex writing skills; children write significantly better than comparison groups; significant gains occur in reading ability; progression occurs faster than the national norm comparison groups on standardized tests; performance is just as strong as non-"writing to read" students on spelling; and progress in writing and reading is greater as reported by teachers.

"Writing To Read" computer area

The "Writing To Read" Center consists of five work stations: computer station, work journal station, listening library station, writing/typing station, and make words station.

- Computer station-- children work in pairs at a computer with a speech attachment that enables the computer to "talk" to the children. They spend 15 minutes going through ten learning cycles that are exercises for the 42 phonemes.

- Work journal station-- they listen to taped lessons to reinforce sounds learned at the computer. Children mark their progress on the back page of the work journal. Material is discussed at home with parents.

- Listening library station-- they listen to recordings of selected children's literature. It is designed to familiarize children with words and give them a chance to match speech with written English.

- Writing/typing station-- the writing area is where the children experiment with writing about the sounds and letters they have just learned. Computers are used at the typing area to give children a faster, easier means of writing.

- Make words station-- through games and use of materials like clay, crayons and chalk, students investigate new combinations of letters and words. This increases word building and facilitates creative expression.

Materials and Equipment

A model configuration of materials and equipment can accommodate up to six classes per day with a maximum of 30 students per class. This model configuration contains the following:

- three enhanced IBM PS/2's, PC color displays and speech

attachments

- six PS/2's with work processing software
- one printer
- three to four "Writing To Read" Program kits
- "Writing To Read" class sets (one per class)
- support materials: one set of children's books; five audio cassette players; 16 headphones; miscellaneous supplies

"VALE" Spanish Language Version of "Writing To Read"

Those children who have no English language skills are placed in "VALE," the Spanish Language version of "Writing To Read." It is identical to the English language version, but has been effectively translated into Spanish. The concept and models are identical.

During the other three hours each day that the children are in SER CARE (there are two four-hour sessions each day), they are provided with other developmental services by the teacher and aide. A typical schedule of activities includes:

- arrival of children, library time and self-expression
- snack
- oral hygiene
- circle time (talk about the day, sing songs)
- Writing to Read

- Personal hygiene
- Free play
- Storytelling

Intergenerational Significance

The senior citizens are involved in SER CARE as volunteers. Both senior citizens and adults serve as contributors to the well-being of the children participants. Senior citizens and adult parents have the responsibilities of directing activities, providing assistance and developing guidelines for day to day occurrences.

"Writing To Read" Evaluation

Pre and Post testing is done using the Language Assessment Skills Survey (LASS), used in school districts for those who indicate another laguage other than English. Class profiles are maintained throughout the program, which track the cycle completions and the children's writing samples.

IBM's Principles of the Alphabet Literacy System (PALS)

Principles of the Alphabet Literacy System (PALS), was developed as a result of IBM's "Writing To Read". The success of WTR brought the demand for the development of an adolescent and adult product to teach writing and reading skills. The basic conclusions from the research behind the two programs demonstrate that people learn more comprehensively and thoroughly when they:

- understand the logic and structure of what they are doing
- are encouraged to think in a consistent way

- o are compelled to figure things out for themselves while learning a new skill or insight
- o involve all of their senses in learning
- o track their own progress
- o help each other
- o develop writing process skills
- o use typewriters or word processors to make writing easier

These criteria, when organized to work together, result in effective systems in learning any subject or skill. They are most carefully designed into the structure of both PALS and Writing To Read. The IBM Principles of the Alphabet Literacy System is a research-based, interactive instructional program. It is designed to improve skills of adolescents and adults who read and write at or below the fifth grade level. A phonetic-based system, it uses animated video and computer-stored voice, to enable non-readers to associate sounds with letters, letters with words and use words to create sentences. PALS combines technology and traditional teaching methodology.

This multi-sensory system is designed to be used in a classroom environment. It accommodates 16 students for each daily one-hour session over 20 weeks (90-100 hours) of instruction. The curriculum is self-paced, hence, it is flexible to the client's needs. By simply touching an IBM InfoWindow video screen, the clients control the flow of information, repeat instructions and learn at their own pace. In addition, they learn touch typing, word processing, and how to operate personal computers and electronic typewriters. SER has utilized the PALS courseware succcessfully with adolescents and adults. FLC clients have improved in writing and reading, touch typing, computer literacy, enunciation, and individual esteem.

PALS is based on a fable in which an alphabetic system is invented to prevent war between two kingdoms. The story is intended to dramatize the importance and power of the written word, and reinforce, through vivid examples, the necessity of learning to read and write. By interacting with the program through the InfoWindow system, clients learn the alphabetic principle, or how to combine the 26 letters of the alphabet to form words. In addition, clients also are taught phonemic spelling-or phonics. This means that they learn to read and write by recognizing different phonemes, or letter-sounds.

The "sound-it-out" approach enables students to grasp the connection between spoken words and written words more easily, since it eliminates the confusion caused by the many spelling inconsistencies of the English language. Clients who use this method when writing learn to choose the "best word" not just settle for one they know how to spell, which helps them achieve higher word recognition more quickly.

PALS Center

PALS offers a proven approach to teaching reading skills. An InfoWindow system used with PALS includes several hardware components:

- an IBM personal computer PS or IBM personal computer and a keyboard
- an IBM InfoWindow Display
- a non-IBM Videodisc player

This configuration combines the power of an IBM personal computer with vivid graphics, pictures and audio from a videodisc player to make presentations

more active, more involving. It also enables students to learn, study, and review materials at their own pace. The alphabetic principle, phonemic learning method and InfoWindow technology come together in the PALS learning center. This on-site learning facility provides an interactive, individualized environment for up to 16 students at a time.

A typical PALS learning center includes:

- four IBM InfoWindow systems--each consisting of an IBM personal computer and IBM InfoWindow display and a non-IBM videodisc player
- eight IBM PS/2s
- PALS work journals
- PALS teachers' manuals
- PALS wall charts
- Typing manuals
- four IBM typewriters

The structured learning environment is managed by a classroom administrator. Students split the one-hour-per-day class by working in pairs at the IBM InfoWindow system on reading and work journal exercises. Then, the clients work individually at typing stations developing typing and writing skills.

The Comprehensive Competencies Program

The Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) is a mechanism for upgrading basic competencies by improving the average effectiveness of

remedial and preparatory efforts. It is a flexible system for conceptualizing, organizing, implementing, managing, and delivering competency-based instruction. The CCP provides for individualized, self-paced instruction, delivered on an open-entry, open-exit basis, covering academic objectives from the beginning level up to those needed for post-secondary education and training, and covering a comprehensive array of functional objectives considered vital for successful adult performance in the world of work, the marketplace and the home. The system is structured so that this range of instruction can be delivered in totality or in parts, as either a core or supplementary compenent of youth and adult programs. It also includes computer mangement and instruction options, so that the potential of computer technologies can be harnessed cost effectively to upgrade basic competencies.

The CCP has separate components addressing two broad competency domains: academic competencies and functional competencies. The academic competencies component covers reading and writing skills including comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and usage. It covers mathematics skills including addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, metrics, personal math, plus some basic trigonometry, algebra, geometry and calculus. Also included are more advanced high school level offerings in science, social studies, and literature and the arts. These academic competencies parallel the basic skills covered by most primary and secondary school curricula, including advanced skills needed for college entry and frequently covered by remediation programs at the post-secondary level.

The functional competencies component covers the applied problem solving, communication and computational skills considered necessary to function successfully in adult life--i.e., occupation-related competencies such as reading want-ads such as comparative shopping and budgeting; citizenship-related competencies such as voting and understanding contracts; knowledge of community resources such as how to access public transportation; and health-related competencies such as first aid, understanding of nutrition, and knowledge of health dangers including alcohol and drug abuse.

THE FLC PROGRAM TRAINING CAPACITY

By providing six (6) work stations in the Basic skills area, an FLC can instruct a minimum of 96 students per day. With two (2) PALS work-stations, a center could instruct 48 students in basic literacy training. With five stations in the Child Care component, SER can train a minimum of 48 children per day. A minimum of 250 students can be trained on a daily basis.

THE FLC PARTICIPANT PROFILE

THE FLC PARTICIPANT INTAKE CRITERIA

One of the most significant factors in selecting clients for the Family Learning Centers is that the local SER corporations receive major funding through the Job Training and Partnership Act, JTPA, which directly affects the participant selection for the various LSC program offerings. Generally, the participants must meet the JTPA eligibility standards for enrollment based on income, age, family total, prior government assistance, if any, and assessment of need. Otherwise, the FLC participant intake criteria requires pre- and post testing and client pre-assessment. The pre-assessment tools are informal evaluations involving interviews: to determine reasons for entering the program, the individual objectives, general attitude and demeanor, and family and employment background; ratings: to determine the estimates of skill levels as assessed by the employees themselves, the instructors and supervisors; portfolio: to determine the writing skills, if any, by requesting such for review, a listing of materials read or attempted, or a listing of real life tasks completed; and, performance samples: to determine oral reading proficiency, if any, by having employees read aloud. Administering testing instruments determine pre-illiteracy: no competency in Spanish of reading, writing, mathematics, problem solving and logic; illiteracy: no competency in English; or functional illiteracy: minimal ability in daily functioning with English.

The FLC Program uses various testing instruments to determine the clients' cognitive abilities before placement into one or more of the Program's course offerings. For general remedial testing for program accountability, the FLC

Program uses the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), Educational Testing Service Tests of Applied Literacy Skills (ETS-Test), Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). For vocational English as a Second Language testing for instructional decision-making, the FLCs in the affiliates use the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), the English as a Second Language Oral Assessment (ESLOA), and Reading Evaluation Adult Diagnosis (READ). All enrollees receive post-testing by the evaluative component contained within the computer courseware and is so marked the "second" phase of the initial pre-testing instrument.

The FLC staff also has designed an information data sheet to secure facts on each enrollee. WTR evaluations are incorporated into the courseware and involve evaluation by an accompanying teacher of task completions after the various WTR cycles. Otherwise, the schools in which FLCs are located administer the LASS test previously mentioned in the Writing To Read.

THE FLC AGREEMENT

Each Family Learning Center established signs an agreement with SER National to ensure compliance with the FLC concept design and with the funding sources' requirements and regulations. In addition, they commit to provide data for research and development as stipulated by SER National and the funding constituencies.

THE FLC FOUNDING ORGANIZATION

1. SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc.

SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc., a non-profit corporation under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, is the largest Hispanic service-oriented corporation in the United States. Formed as a joint effort in 1964 by the two oldest and largest U. S. Hispanic volunteer organizations, the American G.I. Forum and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), SER is distinguished currently as one of the ten most promising learning systems in the nation (Barbara Bush Foundation). SER, which began actual operation in

1965, is a network of employment and training organizations that formulates and advocates initatives that result in the increased development and utilization of America's human resources, with special emphasis on the needs of Hispanics, in the areas of education, training, employment, business and economic opportunity.

SER, which is also the Spanish verb "to be" and the acronym for Service, Employment, and Redevelopment, has its headquarters, SER National, centrally located in Dallas, Texas for better access to its constituency of 42 local SER corporations and 88 satellites in 91 cites. SER National, Inc. develops the employment and training capabilities of the SER network through the provision of training and technical assistnce, research and planning, and program and policy development. It is the collective technical and training arm that directs long-range planning and advocates with private and public sectors for the network.

The SER network is as diverse as it is large. Each affiliate is a fully operational community-based organization that provides programmatic services to those who are in need of targeted redevelopment or employment. Now located in 17 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, the affiliates, called local SER corporations (LSCs), total 42 with 88 branches or satellites. The LSCs are affiliations of SER National, though each is autonomous and governed by its own local board of directors. The services provided by all LSCs and their respective satellites are varied and numerous, while always inclusive of SER's main services: the FLC curriculum, GED, ESL, SLIAG or citizenship training, immigration and vocational counseling, employment training, job placement, and at-risk educational alternatives.

2. Managerial Strengths

SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc., is the largest and most cost-effective Hispanic employment and training non-profit corporation in the nation. Since its incorporation in 1964, SER has managed over 95 million dollars from both the public and the private sector achieving an excellent track record in the performance of services to its community. This success has been possible because of the excellent leadership provided by SER Executives and the

Advisory Boards (Amigos de SER and National Literacy Council). In its 26 years of operation, SER has been privileged to receive support from the federal government, foundations and corporations.

3. Chief Administrative Personnel

At the national level, the Family Learning Centers Expansion Project is under the auspices of the the Chief Administrative Personnel, President of SER, Mr. Pedro Viera, and the Vice-president of Operations, Mr. Juan Constantino. Mr. Viera has extensive experience and training in the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational and literacy programs. He has held multiple positions as a teacher, supervisor, evaluator, and administrator, holding degrees in education, economics, and urban planning. Mr. Juan Constantino is a fifteen year veteran of SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc., having served as an executive director for over fifteen years at the Tri-City SER in Saginaw, Michigan. As Saginaw SER's executive director, Mr. Constantino took the local SER corporation from a half millon dollar operation to 1.3 million. His expertise is in mathematics, accounting minor-management, employment training, marketing and bilingual education. He is the former president of the prestigious National Association of SER Programs.

THE DEMAND FOR FAMILY LEARNING CENTERS

SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc. has an undeniable commitment to the removal of illiteracy that is preventing numerous Hispanics from achieving and maintaining a rewarding existence within the American social and economic infrastructure. SER's Family Learning Center Concept is based on but one premise -- that no person should have to endure the suffering caused by a lack of basic knowledge of which all people have the right and the privilege to acquire. The prerequisite to SER's implementation of this enormous task rests with the constituencies that, too, share in the National Hispanic Literacy Initiative. Consequently, SER is continuing its challenging, organizational task of launching a plan to bring the already proven Family Learning Center Concept to the Hispanic sector.

At the time that the SER Literacy Initiative began, little dialogue was taking

place around the country regarding the problem of illiteracy and much less on the solutions. Today, illiteracy legislation is being passed in our nation's capitol and in state legislatures. SER is doing its part and must be given the opportunity to do more. The need and demand in communities across the country obligate SER to expand its Family Learning Center Program. The requests for FLCs by SER affiliates and numerous unaffiliated community-based organizations is far outpacing SER's capacity to respond to the growing demand.

These current demands for SER Family Learning Center Programs even exceed the staff's capacity to respond to expansion requests due singly to the limited resources at SER National's disposal. A tremendous amount of long range planning, training, travel and technical assistance are involved in developing and implementing the FLCs. The range of activity encompassed in establishing an FLC includes assessing prospective sites, ordering and installing the FLC hardware and software, orienting and training the staff, and streamlining and maintaining the operation. The bulk of the major FLC grant received by SER over the PY years 1987-1990 covered administrative costs largely associated with staff and travel. When appropriations are made from other contributions for a FLC, the majority of the allocation is for the purchase of equipment to furnish it, leaving little for operations and maintenance of organizational elements such as a vital resource backup, the National Literacy Laboratory (NLL).

It is likely that the recent and expected growth in SER partnerships with the corporate sector will place even more demand on the workload of the NLL staff. While SER National has responded to the FLC staffing and NLL workload with VISTA volunteers, the sheer quantity of tasks will inevitably require increased funding to hire additional staff if the FLC demand continues as noted by NLL projections.

SER's Family Learning Center Program has created its basis for expansion by demonstrating its capacity to deliver quality employment, educational and literacy skills services to various public, private, and community sectors. The market for the FLCs' growth application remains wide open. Beyond the existing need and demand, FLCs are projected by the NLL to have the potential

to become replacements for workplace literacy/human resource training centers in corporate environments because of service versatility and cost-effectiveness. FLCs in certain correctional institutions is another future projected avenue of development. In addition, community-based organizations wait to become affiliated with SER in order to implement a FLC to meet the needs of their designated constituency in their respective communities. However, at present, SER National is concentrating on meeting the specific needs of its network of SER affiliates by providing those awaiting their first FLC and those that require further servicing and technical assistance of already operational FLCs to take precedence.

SER'S DEDICATION TO SERVICE

The Family as a viable unit is, unequivocally, SER's single point of concern in its FLC Concept and the Hispanic National Literacy Initiative. All of its endeavors are designed with one single focus in mind-- to prevent the disintergration of the Hispanic family structure. Children and youth raised in an environment corroded by poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, poor health care, crime and violence have no substantive, chance to survive and become contributing, self-supporting citizens without outside assistance. SER wants to do its part in breaking the cyclic effect that a family 's dysfunction can have on each generation. Creating the local community avenue to make the importance of Family known, through sound education and health services, then becomes the responsibility of organizations such as SER, that appear non-threatening to culturally-close Hispanics, simply because SER has acquired the trust and support of the local Hispanic communities in its 26 years of service. SER already has in place a network that can generate the widespread cooperation, outreach, and assistance that is needed to help get information to the Hispanic public sector, more specifically, the Hispanic Family. Therefore, the continued implementation of a National Family Learning Centers Program is an imperative. The FLC Program will continue to provide the nation's disadvantaged Families with the help mandatory for their eventual well-being. SER has effectively involved its network in the improvement of Hispanics and will strive to maintain and enhance the integrity of the Family Learning Centers Program.